

HO 735, Charles H. Thomas House,
ca. 1869, with later additions.
Ellicott City vicinity, public access.
Capsule Summary, page 1.

Description:

The Charles H. Thomas house is a two-bay, two-story frame dwelling, supported on a poured concrete foundation. A low gable roof shelters the main block, which faces northeast. On the rear (or southwest) is a shed-roofed extension containing a kitchen and a staircase to the second floor of the main block, which contains a small vestibule and three rooms. Porch roofs on the front and rear have fallen. The house is seriously deteriorated and vandalized, and this ruinous condition reveals three phases of construction. In its original configuration, the Thomas house was a one-story, single cell dwelling, with board and batten exterior and no finish on the interior. It probably was covered by a shed roof and supported on a stone foundation. Relatively soon after its construction, a second room was added to the southeast side, extending the length of the phase one house. This too had a board and batten exterior, an unfinished interior, and on its exterior door, a molding profile identical to those in the phase one house. Phase three, probably dating to the second quarter of the twentieth century, involved a

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Capsule Summary, page 2.

thorough reconfiguration of the existing two-room dwelling. A third room, built on a concrete slab, was added to the rear and a new poured concrete foundation built up under the phase one and two rooms. Over these a second floor containing three rooms was added, and a gable roof built above. Asbestos shingles covered the exterior walls of the renovated house.

Significance:

The Thomas house is the one surviving dwelling of those original few built for Gray's Water Station (HO 734). It is significant as a rare survival of a once common type--a mid-nineteenth-century, single-cell, frame worker's dwelling. In addition, the house is an artifact of the economic transformation of the community, recording in its fabric the architectural responses to the increasing spatial needs and wealth of its residents. It is likely that in the phase one and two configurations, the dwelling illustrates the role of an authority which provided housing for its workers--in this case, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, or its

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Capsule Summary, page 3.

agents, or perhaps the nearby Gray Manufacturing Company. In phase three, the substantial expansion undertaken suggests work done by residents as owners, a significant change from the company-town model of industrial relations.

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. HO 735

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Charles H. Thomas House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number One mile SE of Ellicott City along CSX Railroad line not for publication

city, town Ellicott City ☒ vicinity of congressional district sixth

state Maryland county Howard

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name State of Maryland

street & number Natural Resources/Dept of Forests and Parks

city, town Annapolis state and zip code Maryland 20701

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Howard County Courthouse liber 370

street & number Street folio 503

city, town Ellicott City state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title none

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. HO 735

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Contributing Resource Count: 1

The Charles H. Thomas house is a two-bay, two-story frame dwelling, supported on a poured concrete foundation. A low gable roof shelters the main block, which faces northeast; on the rear (or southwest) is a shed-roofed extension containing a kitchen and a staircase to the second floor of the main block. Porch roofs on the front and rear have fallen. The house is seriously deteriorated and vandalized, however its ruinous condition reveals significant information about its history. Three phases of construction are evident.

The principal story of the main block contains two rooms, and the wall and ceiling framing are visible. The westernmost room, in phase one, was originally a free-standing, one-room, single-story dwelling, approximately twenty by thirteen feet. This structure possessed a board and batten exterior and an unfinished interior probably sheltered by a shed roof sloping to the rear. The partition between this room and the phase-two room to the east was originally an exterior wall. The vertical board siding here remains in place, painted green, and the battens covering the gaps have been removed, revealing vertical unpainted marks on the boards where each board meets its neighbor. On the interior of the western (phase-one) room, reciprocal-sawn studs comprise the framing, and where modern dry wall has been removed, these studs show no marks of lath or plaster. Above the dropped ceiling, the original roof framing appears to be intact, and reveals a slope to the rear. An exterior doorway to the north and a formerly exterior doorway to the east, now opening into the eastern room of the main block, have identical exterior surrounds an inch and a quarter wide--a three-quarter-inch fillet frames a large bead.

In phase two, this single-cell structure gained another room, appended to the east. The second room took its form from the first, extending the length of the phase-one structure by almost twelve feet, while retaining the phase-one depth of thirteen feet. Similarly, the exterior was sheathed in board and batten, a portion of which survives intact on the southwest wall, and a former exterior door, also opening in the southwest wall, possesses an identical exterior surround to the phase-one doors (a later plank surround was nailed over this molding). The interior also lacks the identifying marks of lath and plaster, which indicate that this room, too, was originally unfinished. The floor level

[Please see continuation sheet.]

Inventory Number HO 735
Charles H. Thomas House, Howard County
Section 7.1

here is about three inches lower than the phase-one room, and some of the studs are circular sawn. No evidence indicates that the structure was greater than a single story.

At some later point in this building's history, probably in the second quarter of the twentieth century, a substantial expansion project was undertaken. A full second story containing a small entry hall and three rooms took shape on top of the earlier two-room structure. To the rear a shed addition standing on a concrete slab sheltered a third room for the principal floor and a stair serving the new upper story. Underneath the main block, the original foundation--of unknown character, but evidently considered insufficient for the added structural load--was replaced with a poured concrete footing extending around the perimeter. The marks of wooden shuttering are still visible, and there are no breaks in this foundation between the phase-one and phase-two sections of the house. A low, windowless cellar extends beneath these two rooms.

Plain plank surrounds enframe every opening on interior and exterior but those noted above, and drywall was installed throughout, apparently at the same time as the false ceiling in the phase-one room. The builder added porches to the front and rear, and sided the house with asbestos shingles; the roofing is of metal sheets, and is probably a still later replacement. A sink and metal cabinet unit, typical of the late 1940s, survives in the kitchen, but there is no other evidence for interior plumbing. The western kitchen window has been removed in favor of a stove pipe exit, and a brick flue opens into the phase-one room; these are the only evidence of heating.

8. Significance

Survey No. HO 735

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates ca. 1869

Builder/Architect unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☒ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Charles H. Thomas House

Please see the historical background for Gray's Water Station, inventory number HO 734, and Williams Run Water Station, inventory number HO 736.

This house is a remarkable survival. It contains within its walls a mid-nineteenth-century, single-cell, frame workers dwelling. A type probably once common across the region, its diminutive size, perishable materials, lack of finish, and consequent association with the lowest economic levels of the community militated against the survival of most of these dwellings. Similarly, their lack of importance kept them largely below the notice of travelers, and their inexpensive materials and ease of construction probably kept their appearance in Company and public records to only the most cursory of entries.

The Thomas house is significant not only as a rare survival of a once common type, but also in that it marks an architectural response of company-provided housing to the increasing spatial needs of laborers--seen in the phase-one structure and in the phase-two alteration made relatively soon afterwards. In addition, the Thomas house reveals architectural modifications deriving from the increased wealth of its residents, changes most likely precipitated by the sale of the house to them. In this sense, the house is an artifact of the economic transformation of the community--from a collective of company-owned buildings within a paternalistic industrial structure to a collection of individually-owned houses adjacent industrial facilities, which eventually ceased to be operational. Still a modest dwelling by twentieth-century standards, the Thomas house reveals how the occupants went to some pains to

[Please see continuation sheet.]

Inventory Number HO 735
Charles H. Thomas House, Howard County
Section 8.1

conserve a structurally solid but now inadequate building, expanding it threefold to meet spatial and hierarchical needs unaffordable or unavailable earlier. They gave to themselves a more imposing and symmetrical two-story facade, and four additional rooms.

These changes likely reflect others of similar character undertaken for the now-vanished dwellings of Gray's and Williams Run Water Stations. As such the Thomas house may be taken to represent three distinct phases of this community's development--an initial one of quickly-constructed, poorly-finished one room dwellings built by or for railroad laborers and their families; an expansion of these by the authorities to allow for some differentiation of room functions; and a final dissolution of the company-town model as the authority divested itself of non-productive assets and the concomitant responsibilities towards a dependent workforce. Perhaps here is recorded in architecture the replacement of a traditional industrial model with one based instead on negotiation, a product of the rise of labor unions in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Although the most likely local authority was the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, or its agents--given the function of Gray's Water Station, where the Thomas house is located--another possibility is the Gray Manufacturing Company. Edward Gray's cotton factory did establish an ancillary residential site on the Howard-County side of the Patapsco River in the mid-nineteenth century. This took form directly across the river from the factory, and was linked to it by a bridge; John Schofield's lithograph of the Patapsco Valley, dating to the early 1860s, illustrates the bridge and one of these dwellings, that of the factory manager Hugh Bone. It is at least possible that the water station dwellings climbing the hillside above were also taken into the orbit of the Gray Cotton Mill.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. HO 735

No bibliographic references mention this house.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property one

1 : 24,000

Quadrangle name Ellicott City

Quadrangle scale 7.5 Series

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries of the site conform to those of Howard County Tax Map 25, parcel 164.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Henry K. Sharp

organization none

date 15 December 1998

street & number 100 South Street West

telephone 840/295-0140

city or town Charlottesville

state Virginia 22902

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DHCP/DHCD
100 COMMUNITY PLACE
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023

Inventory Number HO 735

Charles H. Thomas House, Howard County

Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan

Statewide Historic Contexts

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological Development/Periods:

10) Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870

11) Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930

Historic Period Themes:

2) Community Planning

3) Economic

8) Transportation

Resource Type:

Category: Building

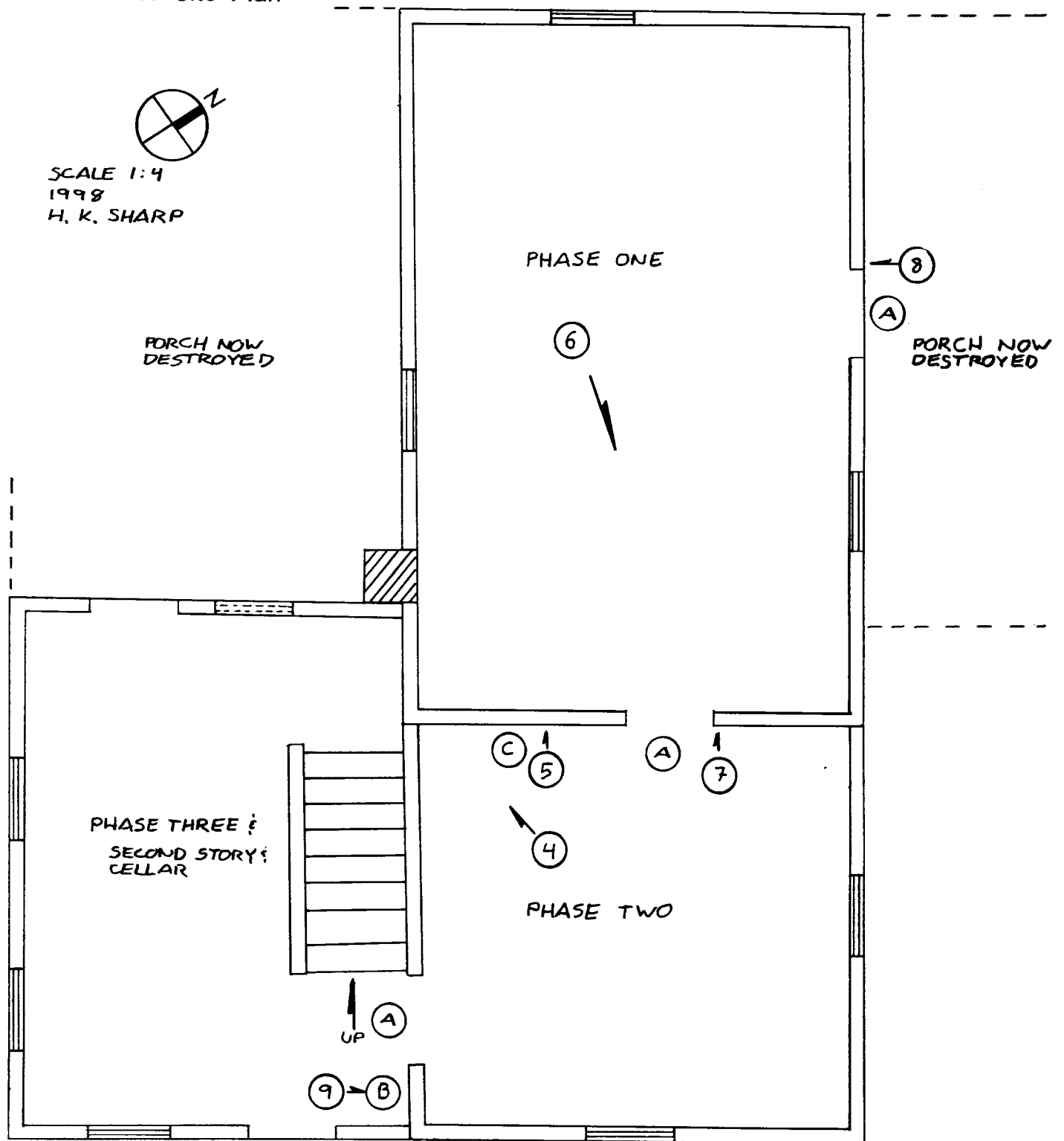
Historic Environment: Village

Historic Functions and Uses: Residence

Known Design Sources: None

Inventory Number HO 735
Charles H. Thomas House, Howard County
Maps.2

Resource Site Plan



(A) EXTERIOR SURROUND INTACT

0
- .75"
- 1.25"

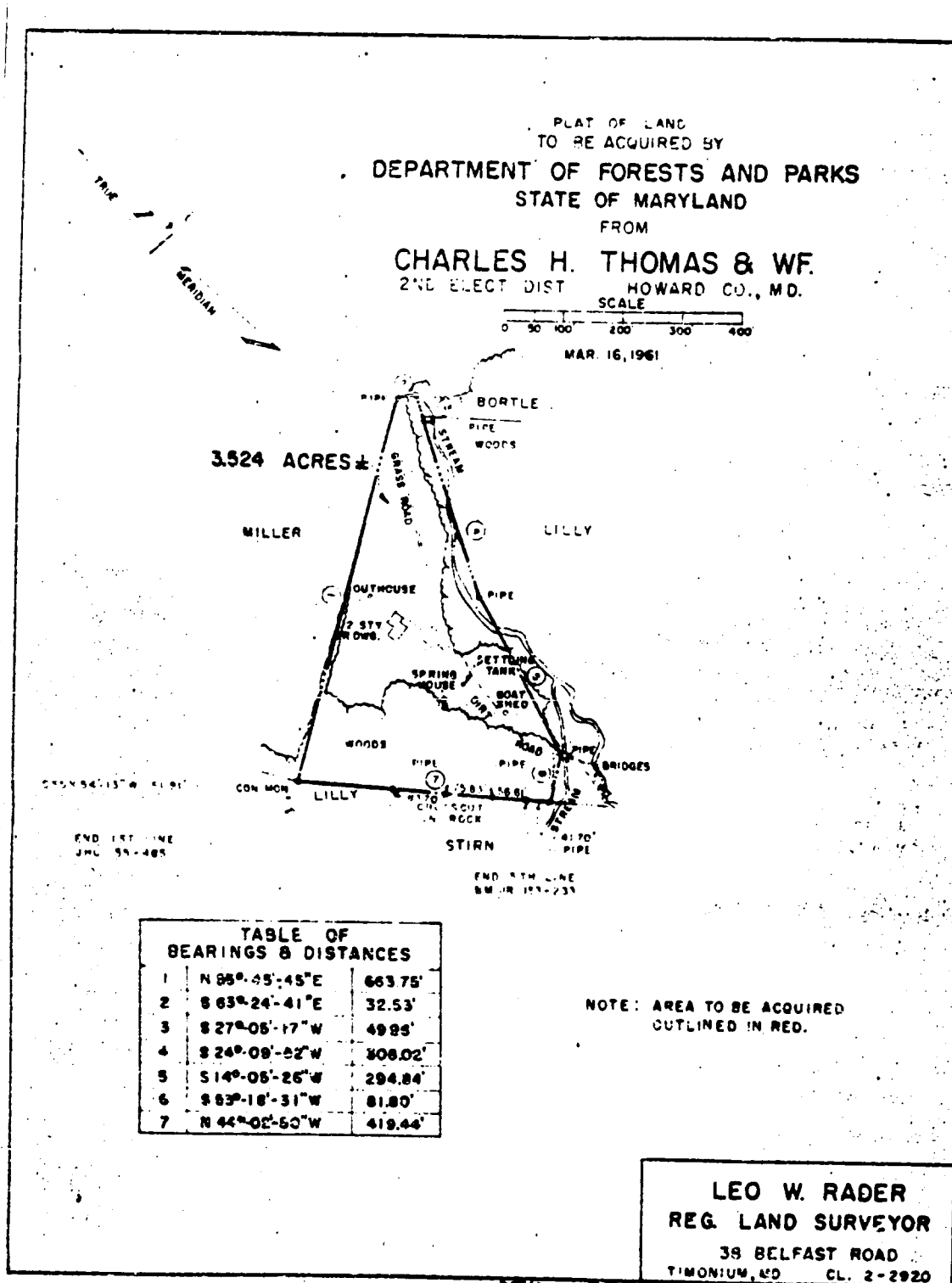
(B) BOARD AND BATTEN INTACT

(C) BATTENS REMOVED

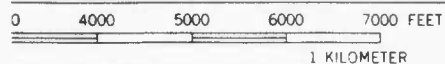
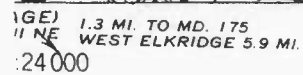
(4) - (9) B & W PRINT NUMBER AND VIEW

Inventory Number HO 735
 Charles H. Thomas House, Howard County
 Plat.1

Charles H. Thomas and wife to State of Maryland, Department of Forests and
 Parks; Howard County Deed Book 370, p. 505; 16 March 1961.



U.S. Geological Survey
Ellicott City 7.5 Quadrangle



Heavy-duty  Light-duty 
Medium-duty Unimproved dirt



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K SHARP

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

VIEW SOUTHEAST

1/9



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

VIEW SOUTHWEST

2/9



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

MARCH 1997

MARYLAND SHPO

VIEW NORTH

3/9



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR VIEW WEST

4/9



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR VIEW NORTHWEST

5/9



BE 445 690

201 8-15-53
K. Dog
Durs more

10 7-2-213
Lindsey Strea
43

HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE
HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR VIEW EAST

6/9



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR DETAIL VIEW NORTHWEST

7/9



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

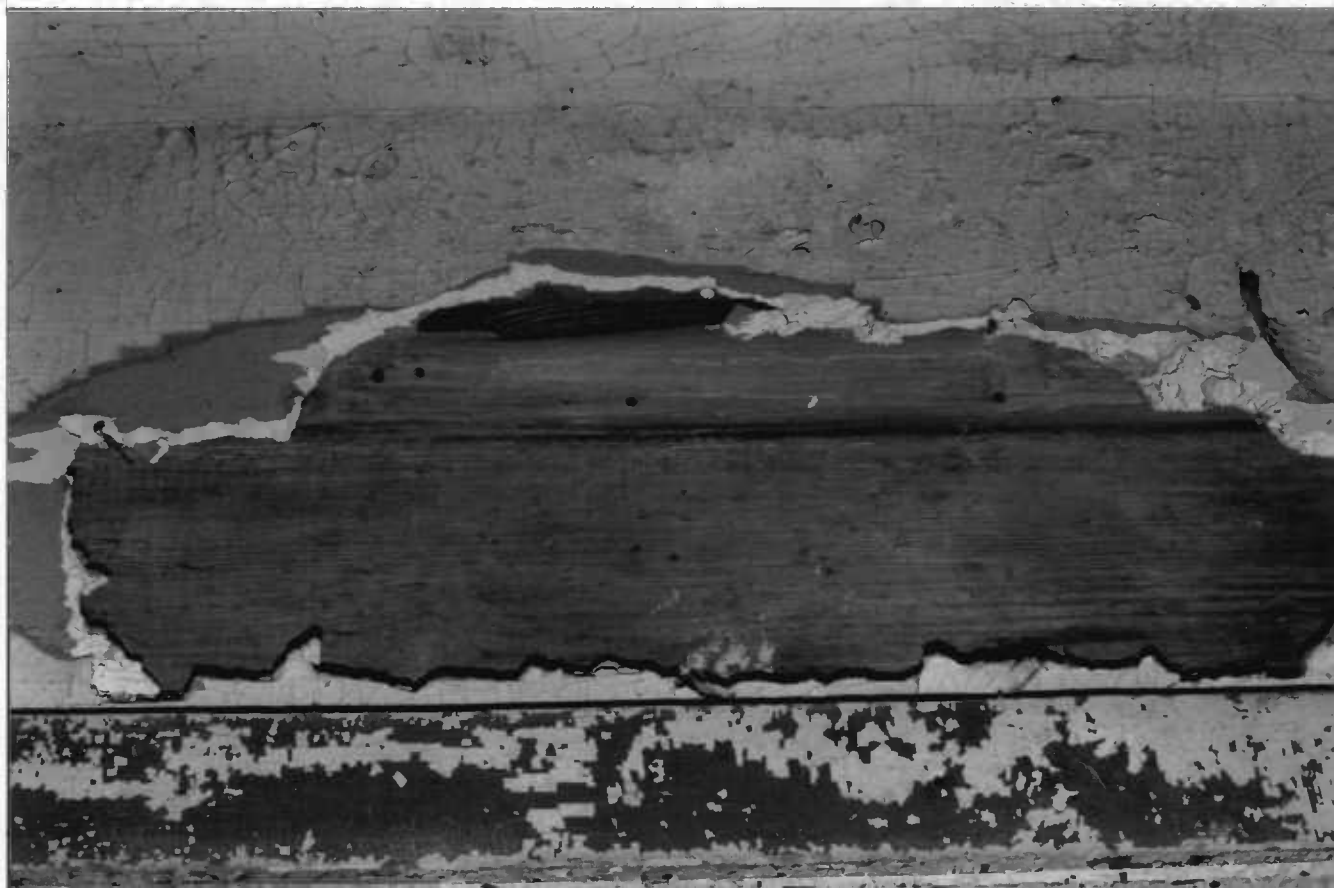
HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

EXTERIOR DETAIL VIEW SOUTHWEST

8/9



HO 735

CHARLES H. THOMAS HOUSE

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND

HENRY K. SHARP

NOVEMBER 1998

MARYLAND SHPO

INTERIOR DETAIL VIEW NORTHEAST

9/9